



News Release Clearance

The Office of Communications (OC) is committed to timely processing and clearing of materials. The following guidelines and practices outline the clearance process for national and agency news releases, program announcements and media advisories. Exceptions to policy guidelines may be authorized by the press secretary's office.

Agencies

Agencies will draft national and agency news releases and program announcements according to the USDA style guidelines and submit electronically to OC for clearance.

National and agency news releases and program announcements should be cleared with agency officials and, if necessary, the Office of the General Counsel, before sending to OC. Failure to do so will result in delay of clearance.

National and agency news releases and program announcements should arrive in OC at least three days prior to release for appropriate clearances.

Agency staff must notify the communications coordinator of unanticipated rush releases as soon as possible and provide a justification for a rush release.

Quotes from the secretary and sub-cabinet officials should be drafted by agency staff and included in the release submitted for approval by OC.

The originating agency is responsible for the accuracy of the information in the release.

Agencies should confirm receipt of the release by telephone with the appropriate coordinator.

Coordinators

Coordinators will simultaneously clear releases with the appropriate offices, including the mission area under secretary, congressional relations and the press secretary.

Coordinators will edit agency news releases and put them into clearance using the attached form. Coordinators will send releases electronically to the press secretary, using the attached format in the "message" portion of the e-mail. The "subject" line for releases should begin with the word, "RELEASE."

Once cleared, the coordinators will work with the OC distribution unit to determine the dissemination plan and post on <http://www.usda.gov>

Press Secretary

The press secretary will review all news releases and program announcements unless they have been designated as "routine." The releases should follow USDA guidelines for style, avoid jargon and feature a strong lead that highlights the release's news value to reporters. The press secretary may request edits before final approval.

The press secretary will clear releases with the Office of the Secretary and/or the White House as necessary.

The press secretary reserves the right to hold or reject releases based on timeliness, news value, appropriateness or quality of writing.

General

Releases announcing meetings should be issued at least seven business days before the meeting. News releases on items appearing in the Federal Register should be issued no

later than the day before being published in the register, and so must be submitted for clearance three working days before that date.

Some program announcements, agency releases and other media materials are considered so routine as not to require clearance by under secretaries, OC and the secretary's office. However, courtesy copies of these releases should be sent to the appropriate coordinator and the press secretary as FYI copies when they are released by the agency. Please work with coordinators to determine "routine" releases.

The secretary must approve personnel releases as well as releases using a quote from the secretary.

MSWord is the preferred word processing software for compatibility.

OC will issue news releases at 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Market sensitive releases are issued at 9 a.m. or at 3 p.m. Media advisories should be issued by 10 a.m. of the day preceding the event. No releases will be issued after 4 p.m. unless the release is urgent or previously approved for late issuance.

Samples

E-MAIL COVER SHEET FOR DRAFT PRESS RELEASES

TITLE:

AGENCY:

TARGET POSTING DATE:

AGENCY RELEASE _____ DEPARTMENT RELEASE _____

FILE NAME:

COMMENTS:



DRAFT NEWS RELEASE

AGENCY:

TITLE:

TARGET POSTING DATE:

DEPARTMENT RELEASE _____ AGENCY RELEASE _____

This material is for your information or approval. If you have any questions or comments, please call the communications coordinator at xxx-xxxx within 24 hours of receiving this release. Thank you.

SIMULTANEOUS CLEARANCE:

____ Communications Coordinator

____ Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations

____ Under Secretary

____ Press Secretary (sent electronically)

FILE NAME:

COMMENTS: